THEOSOPHY

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The Pilgrim, having struggled through and suffered in every form of life and being, is only at the bottom of the valley of matter, and half through his cycle, when he has identified himself with collective Humanity. This, he has made in his own image. In order to progress upwards and homewards, the "God" has now to ascend the weary uphill path of the Golgotha of Life. It is the martyrdom of self-conscious existence. Like Visvakarman he has to sacrifice himself to himself in order to redeem all creatures, to resurrect from the many into the One Life.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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AUM

As rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, passion will break through an unreflecting mind.

—*Dhammapada*

THEOSOPHY

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THE PATH OF MANKIND

THOSE whose hearts and minds are involved in labors for the Theosophical Movement are naturally drawn to ponder the events of history and to wonder what, beneath the confusion of current happenings, is actually going on. How does one recognize evidence of true human development, distinguishing its signs of promise from the sly and vulgar pretensions of the Kali Yuga? Appearances are deceiving. No sooner does a "truth" gain some small currency, its form is adopted by plausible charlatans and pseudo-messiahs who practice the same psychological manipulations that were used by the sophists of old. The rule that a dark shadow follows all human innovations is illustrated again and again, blurring the scene with contradiction and moral anomaly. No wonder H.P.B., in "The Fall of Ideals," stressed the inability of ordinary men to discern the underlying course of progress behind the extremes of cyclic alternation on "the external, illusionary plane."

There are really two basic aspects of history to be considered by the student of Theosophy. Krishna implies this at the beginning of the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* by saying: "Among thousands of mortals one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am." While all men are in some sense strivers, the few who strive for perfection set the keynote of cycles of evolution, establishing the patterns of life during the Golden Age and maintaining the current

of aspiration through all subsequent cyclic changes. From the elevation of the Satya there is inevitable moral decline, over many millennia, to the ugly precipitations and violent struggles of the Iron Age, in which we are now participants and spectators. Yet even today, however difficult to identify, the strivers for perfection are the true protagonists of human development. They work in conscious or unconscious collaboration with the Teachers, the perfected men of former periods of evolution, helping to give the forms of history shape and direction. Their labors in behalf of unfolding growth are always in harmony with the true potentialities of cycles—as for example in the Manasic stimulation afforded to the founders of the American Republic by Thomas Paine, or in the brotherly vision so movingly declared by Abraham Lincoln, which touched the hearts of so many. Just before taking up the presidency, Lincoln said in a speech in Independence Hall, in Philadelphia:

> I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this confederacy so long together. It was . . . something in that Declaration [of Independence] giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that *all* should have an equal chance. . . .

The movement for human evolution—which is the larger Theosophical Movement—is a many-faceted reality which infuses its energies in a variety of ways. Speaking of its influence in her time, H. P. Blavatsky wrote (in "The Cycle Moveth"):

> Among the most prominent in this century is Count L. Tolstoi, a living example, and one of the signs of the times in this period, of the occult working of the ever moving cycle . . . What unexpected idea or vision led him into that new groove of thought? Who knoweth, save himself, or those real "Spirits," who are not likely to gossip it out in a modern séance room?
>
> And yet Count Tolstoi is by no means a solitary example of the work of that mysterious cycle of psychic and spiritual evolution now in its full activity—a work which, silently and unperceived, will grind to dust the most grand and magnificent structures of materialistic speculations, and reduce to naught in a few days the intellectual work of years. What is that moral and invisible Force? Eastern philosophy alone can explain.

Those who know Krishna "as he is" generate that force, while

their colleagues and disciples become avenues for its flow, sometimes deliberately, sometimes unknowingly, as the case may be. It is they who, working for the race as a whole, represent the forefront of the tide of evolution. They are the ones who, informed by initiation into perceptive mysteries, know what needs to be done and are able to recognize the openings for constructive action within the possibilities of the various cycles. There is thus a deep correlation between the inner heart of the great human enterprise, the Promethean mission of the *Manasa Putra,* and the slow development of the world at large. There are times when that relation is open and known, as in the time of the Buddha, and other times when it remains hidden and secret. Its representatives work in the world, and then withdraw, then come again, depending upon cyclic opportunity. The movement of thought in the world, when it is toward freedom of mind, on occasion creates such opportunity, as noted in particular by H.P.B. when speaking of the Theosophical Society:

> Born in the United States of America, the Society was constituted on the model of its Mother Land. The latter, omitting the name of God from its constitution lest it should afford a pretext one day to make a state religion, gives absolute equality to all religions in its laws. All support each and each is in turn protected by the State. The Society, modelled upon this constitution, may fairly be termed a "Republic of Conscience."

There is something of a paradox here, since in the same article ("What Are the Theosophists?") H.P.B. declared the indifference of the Society to politics, saying it "cares but little about the outward human management of the material world." She evidently meant that true freedom is not a political achievement, but belongs to the egoic integrity which, while it may make possible free political forms, is prior to such forms and will, in times of moral decay, resist their corruption. Speaking of the work of the Theosophical Movement, H.P.B. said:

> The whole of its aspirations are directed towards the occult truths of the visible and invisible worlds. Whether the physical man be under the rule of an empire or a republic, concerns only the man of matter. His body may be enslaved; as to his soul, he has the right to give his rulers the proud answer of Socrates to his judges. They have no sway over the *inner* man.

The affairs of the world are one thing; those of the true current of human evolution another and transcendent path of endeavor,

whatever the occasional conjunctions between the two. Yet the work of the strivers for perfection is always in behalf of the world, pursued with comprehension of both the limitations and the possibilities of any particular cycle. As H.P.B. explains in *The Secret Doctrine*:

> Occult philosophy divulges few of its most important mysteries. It drops them like precious pearls, one by one, far and wide apart, and only when forced to do so by the evolutionary tidal wave that carries on humanity slowly, silently, but steadily toward the dawn of the Sixth-Race mankind. For once out of the safe custody of their legitimate heirs and keepers, those mysteries cease to be occult: they fall into the public domain and have to run the risk of becoming in the hands of the selfish —of the *Cains* of the human race—curses more often than blessings. (I, 558.)

The world in general is still far from reflecting the purposes and hopes of strivers for perfection, yet, because it is a world of *human* beings, there is nonetheless striving and a kind of growth. Krishna takes note of this when he says: "Four classes of men who work righteousness worship me, O Arjuna; those who are afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise." All of these will some day awaken to the Krishna within, yet many now follow devious paths, supposing themselves to have found the right or only way, and working with a concentration which permits no looking around. These are the strivers, but not for perfection, and they are afforded what help they are able to accept by those who know how to give it. The emergence of Spiritualism in the nineteenth century is an example both of the tide of evolution (spoken of in the above passage of *The Secret Doctrine*) and of the help it elicited from the Adept teachers. Speaking for the latter (in *Lucifer* III, 174), H.P.B. said:

> A crisis had arrived in which it was absolutely necessary to bring within the reach of our generation the Esoteric Doctrine of the eternal cycles. Religion, both in the West and East, had long been smothering beneath the dust heaps of Sectarianism and enfranchised Science. For lack of any scientific religious concept, Science was giving Religion the *coup-de-grâce* with the iron bar of Materialism. To crown the disorder the phantom-world of Hades, or Kama-loca, had burst in a muddy torrent into ten thousand séance-rooms, and created most misleading notions of man's *post-mortem* state. Nothing but a few fundamental tenets from the Esoteric Philosophy, sketched in broad

> outlines . . . could snatch mankind from drowning in the sea of ignorance.

Two years later, however, in a *Lucifer* article (March, 1890), she placed the outbreak of Spiritualism in a larger framework of meaning, remarking that "its phenomena, its psychic and mesmeric manifestations, were but the cyclic pioneers of the revival of prehistoric Theosophy, and the occult Gnosticism of the antediluvian mysteries." In what sense was Spiritualism the cyclic pioneer of Theosophy?

We may think that those able to see behind the veil of matter, and who know the times of the cycles, regarded the rising psychic tide as a change in the relationship of the inner principles of mankind—a change that would open minds to new possibilities, while, at the same time, exposing the race to serious dangers. These friends and Teachers of the human race used the possibilities and warned against the dangers. As a result of the phenomena, H.P.B. remarked, many among those upon whom "the spiritual and psychic evolution of the cycle wrought an indelible impression" could never return to their former materialistic ideas. By such means the skepticism of modern thought could be shaken, and its confident assumptions challenged, leading eventually to consideration of high possibilities:

> However unsatisfactory their philosophical interpretation, these phenomena being genuine and true as truth itself in their being and reality, they were undeniable; and being in their very nature beyond denial, they came to be regarded as evident proofs of a life beyond—opening, moreover, a wide range for the admission of every metaphysical possibility. . . . Beliefs such as man's survival after death, and the immortality of Spirit, were no longer pooh-poohed as figments of imagination; for, prove once the genuineness of such transcendental phenomena to be beyond the realm of matter, and beyond investigation by means of *physical* science, and—whether these phenomena contain *per se* or not the *proof of immortality*, demonstrating as they do the existence of invisible and spiritual regions where other forces than those known to exact science are at work—they are shown to lie beyond the realm of materialism.

That such a great change in the race mind was indeed accomplished is now evident to all. Today, a century later, the assumptions of materialism are crumbling on every hand, although it must be admitted that their replacement by true philosophy is not by any means common. But now, at least, the inspection of a

wide variety of philosophical ideas is no longer barred by inherited assumption. H.P.B. gives indication of the workings of such changes by telling about the early members of the Theosophical Society (in "The Drift of Western Spiritualism"):

> The founders of our Society were mainly veteran Spiritualists, who had outgrown their amazement at the strange phenomena, and felt the necessity to investigate the laws of mediumship to the very bottom. Their reading of medieval and ancient works upon the occult sciences had shown them that our modern phenomena were but repetitions of what had been seen, studied, and comprehended in former epochs. . . . They found, moreover, that there were two sides of Occultism—a good and an evil side; and that it was a dangerous and fearful thing for the inexperienced to meddle with the latter—dangerous to our moral as to our physical nature. . . .
>
> To comprehend modern mediumship it is, in short, indispensable to familiarize oneself with the Yoga Philosophy; and the aphorisms of Patanjali are even more essential than the "Divine Revelations" of Andrew Jackson Davis.

H.P.B. concluded this discussion:

> Theosophy can be styled the enemy of Spiritualism with no more propriety than of Mesmerism, or any other branch of Psychology. In this wondrous outburst of phenomena that the Western world has been seeing since 1848, is presented such an opportunity to investigate the hidden mysteries of being as the world has scarcely known before. Theosophists can only urge that these phenomena shall be studied so thoroughly that our epoch shall not pass away with the mighty problem unsolved. . . . Theosophy, with its design to search back into historic records for proof, may be regarded as the natural outcome of phenomenalistic Spiritualism, or as a touchstone to show the value of its pure gold. One must know both to comprehend what is Man.

How different, one may reflect, this start of the Theosophical Movement in the world from the mood of many present students and followers of H.P.B.! Not only has a century passed, but the winnowing process to which the Movement itself is continually subjected has done its work. Not the wonders of psychic phenomena, but the verities of Karma and Reincarnation make the bond among students of the philosophy they have embraced. Not so much, now, an explanation of psychic wonders, although explanation is available, this philosophy is recognized as invitation to those who may become strivers for perfection—an invitation,

for some, to knock on the doors of Initiation. The latter are those who have taken to heart the counsel of *Light on the Path*:

> It is impossible to help others till you have obtained some certainty of your own. When you have learned the first twenty-one rules and have entered the Hall of Learning with your powers developed and sense unchained, then you will find there is a fount within you from which speech will arise.

Meanwhile, the world has its intellectual and psychic evolution to pursue, and in the present the provocations to independent and philosophical thinking, brought by the times, are more diverse than they were a hundred years ago, in some ways far more insistent. Not just the continuity of life after death, but the continuity of life on earth as well, is among the questions people are compelled to wonder about. The warnings from nature and from scores of thoughtful interpreters of nature keep on bringing such questions to public attention. There has also been an evolution in the race mind itself, affording capacities which were hardly available to men of science and learning in the nineteenth century. Failures, troubles, and disillusionments are only evils to the personality. Their impact on the inner man may raise to the surface forgotten longings, and even stir to activity fresh intuitions of ancient truth. There are many, today, who, if they have not yet felt the call to become strivers for perfection, have determined to learn the ways of a more cooperative life with nature and with one another. This, in the end, may prove as good or perhaps a better preparation for taking part, sooner or later, in the Theosophical Movement, than the provocatives of Spiritualism. In any event, the urgencies which demand awakening of some sort are much stronger now, and while the distinction remains between the needs, struggles, and hopes of the world at large and the course and learning of those who would become strivers for perfection—a distinction that will continue, no doubt, until mankind has lost its "thick coats of matter"—the parallels may become stronger between the two ways of striving. Such is the implication of the closing page of the *Key to Theosophy,* whatever the present obscurity concerning how such a desired condition may actually come about.

THE UNDISCLOSED VEDA

H.P.B. brought occult doctrines, teachings of the laws and principles of Nature which the West had not known; she brought, too, and gave to Western man the Manasic fire of her expression, the living intellectual embodiment of those doctrines; and in herself she demonstrated the unswerving devotion to an ideal which turns teachings into wisdom, yearning into realization. More she could not do, even for disciples.

The lower mind, knowing only distinctions and differences, the tool of analysis and classification, requires categories and definitions. She gave them, but in such manner that the inadequacy of these forms of thought, as finalities of knowing, is self-evident, so that one who studies the classifications taught by H.P.B. soon learns to make his mind flexible, without rigid conceptions, realizing that no formula can contain the truth, although it may suggest the direction where truth may be found. The lesson of the classifications of the Secret Doctrine is that all divisive analysis will some day be set aside; it will give way to the unity of experience, of many-faceted direct perception. The traveler at home needs no map for orientation; he lives in and of that which must be pictured in a diagram for others.

Arching across the muddles of personal speculation, the piercing mind of H.P.B. vaulted into the region of ideal truths, carrying the mind of the student as on a beam of radiant energy. In the philosophic synthesis of the Secret Doctrine, he finds that "above," "beyond," and "within" are a dimensionless identity. The more impersonal and inclusive the thought, the more securely is it rooted in the individual soul, that self-existent point of contact with the universal and the infinite. The Secret Doctrine is no set of bloodless abstractions, but architectonic chords to arouse the intuitive genius in every man, to give voice to the recondite harmonies of spiritual perception, and sustenance to the surge of aspiration.

There is an intelligent energy in man that flies like lightning and cuts through all obstacles like a sharp sword. At rest, it is firmer

NOTE.—This article first appeared in THEOSOPHY for May, 1943.

than the mountainous skeleton of earth; in action, it moves with the deft purpose of the healer's fingertips. It is the will. Underneath the temporal events and accidents of history which surround the life of H.P.B., linking her every act, bearing the force of her purpose, was the adept-will of the Teacher. Unless that will is recognized, its spiritual meaning apprehended, the Theosophical Movement must be an inscrutable mystery, the structure of the philosophy a cenotaph of dreams. The life of the Teacher is an instance of reality, a showing forth of how heart and mind and truth are joined in life. From such a Teacher we learn not simply of "H.P.B.," but of the Self and its powers. That is what she came to teach.

How may the threefold lesson be grasped? The endless variety of life itself is the field of learning. The prismatic light of the teaching must shine through our own eyes and heart, reach and penetrate into every plane and aspect of human experience, until every fragment becomes part of a larger relation and every act an evidence of Law. Then, what was "classification" *lives* as hierarchies of sentient being, what was "metaphysics" grows into the vibrant geometry of life. What is Mahamaya to the eye of sense becomes for the soul the Book of Nature. The flow of the Great Breath portrays the endless drama of existence, the secret of the Mysteries, to the initiate. Hence, the Teachers all have said, "Lift up thine eyes." They can not do more.

I believe that education means to acquaint the young with the best heritage of the human race. But while much of this heritage is expressed in words, it is effective only if these words become reality in the person of the teacher and in the practice and structure of society. Only the idea which has materialized in the flesh can influence man; the idea which remains a word only changes words.

—Erich Fromm

THE RACES OF MAN

I: ORIGINS

NO more than Science, does esoteric philosophy admit *design* or "special creation." It rejects every claim to the "miraculous," and accepts nothing outside the uniform and immutable laws of Nature. But it teaches a cyclic law, a double stream of force (or spirit) and of matter, which, starting from the *neutral centre* of Being, develops in its cyclic progress and incessant transformations.

This double evolution in two contrary directions, required various ages, of divers natures and degrees of spirituality and intellectuality, to fabricate the being now known as man. Furthermore, the one absolute, ever acting and never erring law, which proceeds on the same lines from one eternity (or Manvantara) to the other—ever furnishing an ascending scale for the manifested, but plunging Spirit deeper and deeper into materiality on the one hand, and then *redeeming it through flesh* and liberating it—this law, we say, uses for these purposes the Beings from other and higher planes, men, or *Minds* (Manus) in accordance with their Karmic exigencies.

According to the ancient doctrines, every member of this varied ethereal population, from the highest "Gods" down to the soulless Elementals, was evolved by the ceaseless motion inherent in the astral light. Light is force, and the latter is produced by the *will*. As this will proceeds from an intelligence which cannot err, for it is absolute and immutable and has nothing of the material organs of *human* thought in it, being the superfine pure emanation of the ONE LIFE itself, it proceeds from the beginning of time, according to immutable laws, to evolve the elementary fabric requisite for subsequent generations of what we term human races. All of the latter, whether belonging to this planet or to some other of the myriads in space, have their earthly bodies evolved in this matrix out of the bodies of a certain class of these elemental beings—the primordial germ of Gods and men—which have passed away into the invisible worlds. . . . As by gradual progres-

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NOTE.—This is the first part of a six-part series on the races of mankind, collated from *The Secret Doctrine* and articles by H.P.B.

sion from the star-cloudlet to the development of the physical body of man, the rule holds good, so from the Universal Æther to the incarnate human spirit, they traced one uninterrupted series of entities. These evolutions were from the world of Spirit into the world of gross Matter; and through that back again to the source of all things. The "descent of species" was to them a descent from the Spirit, primal source of all, to the "degradation of Matter."

Therefore *our* human forms have existed in the Eternity as astral or ethereal prototypes; according to which models, the Spiritual Beings (or Gods) whose duty it was to bring them into objective being and terrestrial life, evolved the protoplasmic forms of the future *Egos* from *their own essence*. After which, when this human *Upadhi*, or basic mould was ready, the natural terrestrial Forces began to work on those supersensuous moulds *which contained, besides their own, the elements of all the past vegetable and future animal forms of this globe in them*. Therefore, man's *outward* shell passed through every vegetable and animal body before it assumed the human shape.

Either this, or—man is a distinct being. Occult philosophy may call him that, because of his distinctly *dual* nature. Science cannot do so, once that it rejects every interference save *mechanical laws, and* admits of no principle outside matter. The former—the archaic Science—allows the human physical frame to have passed through every form, from the lowest to the very highest, its present one, or from the simple to the complex—to use the accepted terms. But it claims that in this cycle (the fourth), the frame having already existed among the types and models of nature from the preceding Rounds—that it was quite ready for man from the beginning of *this Round*. The Monad had but to step into the astral body of the progenitors, in order that the work of physical consolidation should begin around the shadowy prototype.

Everything in the Universe follows analogy. "As above, so below"; Man is the microcosm of the Universe. That which takes place on the spiritual plane repeats itself on the Cosmic plane. Concretion follows the lines of abstraction. Thus corresponding to the Sephirothal Crown (or upper triad) there are the three elemental Kingdoms, which precede the Mineral. As the spiritual Monad is One, Universal, Boundless and Impartite, whose rays, nevertheless, form what we, in our ignorance, call the "Individual Monads" of men, so the Mineral Monad—being at the opposite

point of the circle—is also One—and from it proceed the countless physical atoms, which Science is beginning to regard as individualized.

Otherwise how could one account for and explain mathematically the evolutionary and spiral progress of the Four Kingdoms? The ocean (of matter) does not divide into its potential and constituent drops until the sweep of the life-impulse reaches the evolutionary stage of man-birth. The tendency towards segregation into individual Monads is gradual, and in the higher animals comes almost to the point. The "Monadic Essence" begins to imperceptibly differentiate towards individual consciousness in the Vegetable Kingdom. As the Monads are uncompounded things, as correctly defined by Leibnitz, it is the spiritual essence which vivifies them in their degrees of differentiation, which properly constitutes the Monad—not the atomic aggregation, which is only the vehicle and the substance through which thrill the lower and higher degrees of intelligence. It is our Dhyan Chohanic essence—the *causality* of the *primal cause* which creates *physical* man—which is the living, active and potential matter, pregnant *per se* with that animal consciousness of a superior kind, such as is found in the ant and the beaver, which produces the long series of physiological differentiations.

Limiting the teaching strictly to this, our earth, it may be shown that, as the ethereal forms of the first Men are first projected on seven zones by seven Dhyan-Chohanic *centers of* Force, so there are centres of creative power for every ROOT or parent species of the host of forms of vegetable and animal life. This is, again, no "special creation," nor is there any "Design," except in the general "ground-plan" worked out by the universal law. Thus, when we say that *Nature* provides for every animal and plant, whether large or small, we speak correctly. For, it is those terrestrial spirits of Nature, who form the aggregated Nature; which, if it fails occasionally in its design, is neither to be considered blind, nor to be taxed with the failure; since, belonging to *a differentiated* sum of qualities and attributes, it is in virtue of that alone *conditioned and imperfect.*

Were there no such thing as evolutionary cycles, an eternal spiral progress into matter with a proportionate *obscuration* of spirit—though the two are one—followed by an inverse ascent into spirit and the defeat of matter—active and passive by turn—

how explain the discoveries of zoology and geology? The truth is that the differentiating "causes" known to modern science only come into operation after the *physicalization of the primeval animal root-types out of the astral.* There *can be no objective* form on Earth (nor in the Universe either), without its astral prototype being first formed in Space . . . . all the primitive models in every kingdom of nature begin by being ethereal, transparent, films. This, of course, takes place only in the first beginning of life. It was the duty of the first "differentiated Egos" to imbue primordial matter with the evolutionary impulse and guide its formative powers in the fashioning of its productions. After the Earth had been made ready by the *lower* and more material powers, and its three Kingdoms fairly started on their way to be "fruitful and multiply," the higher powers, the Archangels or Dhyanis, were compelled by the evolutionary Law to descend on Earth, in order to construct the crown of its evolution—MAN.

Man is certainly *no* special creation, and he is the product of Nature's gradual perfective work, like any other living unit on this Earth. But this is only with regard to the human tabernacle. That which lives and thinks in man and survives that frame, the masterpiece of evolution—is the "Eternal Pilgrim," the Protean differentiation in space and time of the One Absolute "unknowable."

(*To be continued*)

THE SUN

In the middle of all sits the Sun, enthroned. In this most beautiful temple, could we place this luminary in any better position from which he can illuminate the whole at once? He is rightly called the Lamp, the Mind, the Ruler of the Universe. Hermes Trismegistus names him the Visible God, Sophocles' Electra calls him the All-seeing. So the Sun sits as on a royal throne ruling his children, the planets which circle round him.

—COPERNICUS

OF STUDYING THEOSOPHY

II

ONE of the difficulties under which students of Theosophy labour is the partial and therefore one-sided or distorted view they take of the Wisdom-Religion. For some, Theosophy takes the place of an out-worn creed; for others it provides a better field for philosophic speculation; for a third class it is the interesting study of a new science which instructs where modern knowledge breaks down; for still others it affords, through the many and varied associations which exist in its name and for its sake, avenues of some altruistic expression. Only a few seem to recognize the synthetic character of Theosophy, *viz.*, that it is the Religion of the Spirit, free and immortal; that it is the Philosophy of the Heart, to be practiced universally by us all the time; that it is the Science of Life which instructs us in the self-devised methods of never-dying energies moving in the direction of Universal Self-Consciousness, that it is the teacher of the Higher Altruism which calls for self-correction and growth from within, on the part of every being, resulting in the growth of all. . . .

Such a recognition will inevitably lead him [the student] to study every Theosophic truth from three points of view—spirit, mind, matter; also to apply every truth in three distinct spheres of heart, head, hands. Such study and practice will convince him very soon that the synthesis is rooted in and proceeds from within his own spiritual Being, but affects through his actions the deeds of others; through his thoughts, the minds of others; and that in turn he is so affected by others. If Theosophy in study reveals itself as a synthesis of religion, philosophy and science, in applying its tenets and doctrines we soon begin to sense that an additional or fourth factor exists—a kind of over-soul, which is the Higher Altruism.

Altruism is the Absolute whose three aspects are the religion to be *lived* in terms of the philosophy to be learnt and of the science to be practised. To *practise*, to *learn*, to *live*, for and as the All—is to manifest the Living Power of Theosophy.

NOTE.—This collation from various sources in Theosophical literature is reprinted from THEOSOPHY for May, 1958.

This living power of Theosophy lies latent, buried deep down, in the heart of every man. Therefore everyone who is not a Theosophist is a Theosophist in embryo. It ought to be clear to an intelligent student that his task, however difficult, is not complex. Theosophy advocates the simple life by insistently pointing out in a hundred ways that the power by which we live is of simple character, both in its origin and in its operations. Men have strayed away from this simplicity and have assumed a million complexes by looking for knowledge outside of the Self, for peace and happiness *without* the Self, for divinity in other than the Self. Thus started on the inclined plane of retrogression we see division where a solidarity exists—division between science and religion, between inanimate and animate, between secular and sacred. In place of "the immanence of God and the solidarity of man" is proclaimed—God in the heaven and men the children of dust and worms on earth. This blunder and its correction which Theosophy puts forward has to be understood and applied by each student to himself in his own life. Unless this is done Theosophy will remain a religion, a philosophy, a science, a mode of charity, a method of philanthrophy in contradistinction to other religions, philosophies, sciences, modes and methods of altrustic efforts.

H. P. Blavatsky has recorded her complaint in more than one place that solidarity in the ranks of Theosophists did not exist in spite of the fact that they were able to preach religious truths, and to put before the scientific world wonderful information in an instructive way. The religion of Universal Spirit fails to inspire most of us when our feelings are hurt by a fellow-Theosophist, or to give us courage to stand by him when he is unjustly attacked. Our philosophy of the one and Impartite Self evaporates into impracticality when we have to say that the moral leper, the intellectual prostitute, the psychically drunk, are our brothers. This will continue as long as the Synthesis of Theosophy is not applied by us to purify our lower nature and to create a higher perception of altruism.

The Living Power of Theosophy must become the power by which we live. As we have a material instrument and an energizing mind, and as we are in being spiritual, we must *live as spiritual beings* our Religion of Joyous Immortality which ensouls and illumines the mind. Aided by the philosophy of Theosophy we must let that mind energize our house of flesh, so that the latter is no

more a palace of pleasure, but a Temple of the Living God, the Ruler who rules from within. (1)

The first requirement of the spiritual life is to learn the value of silence. The conservation of spiritual energy demands that the frittering away of soul-forces be stopped. There are very few avenues through which man's divinity goes to waste as through sound and speech. The dirt and dregs of our Kamic nature often find their outlet in useless or injurious speech. . . .

In spiritual growth, learning and listening go together; they precede teaching and speaking. In ancient India the moment the seeker of the peace of wisdom resolved to follow the footsteps of the guru, the pupil gained the name of *shravaka,*—a listener. In ancient Greece he was named *akoustikos.* He was not even permitted to ask questions; *bij-sutras,* seed-thoughts were given him to ponder over and understand to the best of his ability. These thoughts were intended as purificatory food which if adequately assimilated would cleanse his kamic nature; not only remove the accumulated poisons of the past but reveal to the pupil the correct alchemical process of transforming within his own constitution, passion into compassion, lust into love, antipathy into sympathy. Once started on this highway he was ready to become an exerciser, a positive doer, *shramana,* the *asketes* of the Greeks.

Our modern Theosophical student has not fully recognized the occult significance of silence. A vow of silence does not mean to become mute, and not to speak at all. It consists in (1) self-imposition of periodic silence: (2) not indulging at any time in injurious and untruthful speech; (3) not giving way to useless speech; (4) not asking questions on philosophy or practice till what has already been taught or is before us is fully scanned and thoroughly looked into from the point of view of our particular questions; (5) not indulging in *ahankaric* speech, *i.e.*, not making statements about the Divine Self or Ego in terms of our kamic or lower nature; (6) not indulging in injurious speech regarding our lower nature, our own faults and weaknesses, lest by speaking of them we lend them the strength which ensues from the power of speech; (7) not to speak even that which is true unless at proper times, to proper people, under proper circumstances.

While this sevenfold exercise is practised, secrecy has to be observed about it. To refer to, or speak about the exercise we have undertaken and are practising, is to vitiate it altogether and make it worse than useless. Such an indulgence gives birth to

conceit and enhances it where it already exists. Secrecy and silence are needed and a contemplation on their kinship should precede the sevenfold exercise.

Deliberate speech will be the first result. It will not be rooted in kama—passion—but in Buddhi—compassion. There are two types of criticism: one is fault-finding; the other is the perception of virtue in meritorious expressions, but also the perception of virtue behind vice, demerit and weakness. The deceit of the dice is Shri Krishna and the power to perceive that comes from the second type of criticism. The first is criticism by words of Kama, the second is by words of understanding; the first is on the plane of words, the second on the plane of ideas; the first is of head-learning, the second of soul-wisdom; the first praises or condemns the lower nature, the second imports into it the strength of the higher, causing readjustment; the first has behind it the superior spirit of teaching, the second the sublime spirit of learning and propagating that which is learnt. . . .

In all affairs of thought, feeling and action our tendency is to look for *our* thoughts repeated, *our* feelings reproduced, *our* actions imitated. We regard ourselves as the model for all examination; we the pattern whereby right and wrong is to be determined. Such an attitude is not blatantly expressed, but veils itself in a subtle form of humility, which is mock modesty.

There are a hundred who plunge into the waters of the ocean for pleasure or profit to only one who dives for the pearl of great price. The latter proceeds to his work in the secrecy of silence and his art in the ocean is of a very different kind from that of the ordinary swimmer. Those who are in search of the pearl of wisdom must acquire the strength of muscle, the control of breath and the finesse of stroke, necessary against the stormy billows of this ocean of Samsara. These lie securely hidden in the Power of Silence. That power must be invoked, not by a pledge to some other being, but by a vow silently sung and silently registered in the sanctuary of the Heart. Thus the path begins in silence and secrecy and ends in the hearing and the chanting of the soundless Sound. (2)

The opinion of theosophical students is divided in respect to reading. There are those who consider that the chief source of learning is study, while others deprecate much reading and urge us to confine our efforts to "living the life." The truth of course

is that both methods are to be combined. They serve different departments of the same end. By study—especially of scriptures—we are enabled to form more just ideas of what "the life" may be, and in what way we shall live it. By living it, we correct all mistaken ideas; we shave and prune the excrescences of the mind. The application of spiritual (impersonal) ideas in daily life; the study of how we may hold to them amid the practical routine; the endeavour to discover them within all material conditions and things; the effort to develop them; broaden the nature and enable us, through the spiritual will, to alchemize it into spiritual essences and powers. . . . All the powers existing in the macrocosm having also their various specific seats in man, it follows plainly that, if we wish to evolve more rapidly by means of these powers, as the universe also evolves by them, we must think and think within ourselves. These forces are under the guidance of will, thought, and knowledge; reading will never enable us to reach them; thinking may put us on their track. . . .

The whole problem for both writer and reader consists in eschewing mere forms, in looking beyond words to the principles which they represent faintly. A man represents one or more universals; his thought should do the same. He will never mislead while he only gives us these; we shall never misunderstand him while we look for nothing less. All reading is useless, so far as spiritual progress is concerned, which cannot be conducted upon the above lines. If they limit your reading, they will extend your thinking. So much the better, for thinking is the path toward becoming. "What a man thinks, that he is; this is the old secret," say the Upanishads. There is a way of taking a thought and brooding over it as a bird broods on the nest; by this method the true thought hatches out and itself manifests to us. We must apply these thoughts to the touchstone of our own souls. Reading and thinking are not to be divorced. They should be one act; then each would correct and equilibrate the other. (3)

It is a trite axiom that truth exists independent of human error, and he who would know the truth, must rise up to its level and not try the ridiculous task of dragging it down to his own standard. Every metaphysician knows that Absolute Truth is the Eternal Reality which survives all the transient phenomena. . . . Language belongs to the world of relativity, while Truth is the Absolute Reality. It is therefore vain to suppose that any language, however ancient or sublime, can express Abstract Truth. The latter

exists in the world of ideas, and the ideal can be perceived by the sense belonging to that world. Words can merely clothe the ideas, but no number of words can convey an idea to one who is incapable of perceiving it. Every one of us has within him the latent capacity or a sense dormant in us which can take cognisance of Abstract Truth, although the development of that sense or, more correctly speaking, the assimilation of our intellect with that higher sense, may vary in different persons, according to circumstances, education and discipline. That higher sense which is the potential capacity of every human being is in eternal contact with Reality, and every one of us has experienced moments when, being for the time *en rapport* with that higher sense, we realise the eternal verities. The sole question is how to focalise ourselves entirely in that higher sense. Directly we realize this truth, we are brought face to face with occultism. Occultism teaches its votaries what sort of training will bring on such a development. It never dogmatises, but only recommends certain methods which the experience of ages has proved to be the best suited to the purpose. But just as the harmony of nature consists in symphonious discord, so also the harmony of occult training (in other words, individual human progress) consists in discord of details. The scope of Occultism being a study of Nature, both in its phenomenal and noumenal aspects, its organisation is in exact harmony with the plan of Nature. Different constitutions require different details in training, and different men can better grasp the idea clothed in different expressions. . . . This will show why it is that until a certain stage is reached, the *Chela* is generally left to himself, and why he is never given verbal or written instructions regarding the truths of Nature. . . . His success or failure depends upon his capacity for the assimilation of the Abstract Truth his higher sense perceives. . . .

At the beginning of our studies we are apt to be misled by the supposition that our earth, or the planetary chain, or the solar system, constitutes infinity and that eternity can be measured by numbers. Often and often have the Mahatmas warned us against this error, and yet we do, now and then, try to limit the infinity to our standard instead of endeavouring to expand ourselves to its conception. This has led some naturally to a sense of isolation, and to forget that the same Law of Cosmic Evolution, which has brought us to our present stage of individual differentiation, is tending to lead us gradually to the original undifferentiated con-

dition. Such allow themselves to be imbued so much with a sense of personality that they try to rebel against the idea of Absolute Unity. Forcing themselves thus in a state of isolation, they endeavour to ride the Cosmic Law which must have its course; and the natural result is annihilation through the throes of disintegration. This it is which constitutes the bridge, the dangerous point in evolution. . . . And this is why selfishness, which is the result of a strong sense of personality, is detrimental to spiritual progress. . . . We should therefore constantly remember that the present is not the apex of evolution, and that if we would not be annihilated, we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by a sense of personal isolation and consequent worldly vanities and shows. This world does not constitute infinity, nor does our solar system, nor does the immeasurable expanse our physical senses can take cognisance of. All these and more are but an infinitesimal atom of the Absolute Infinity. The idea of personality is limited to our physical senses which, belonging as they do to the *Rupa Loka* (world of forms), must perish, since we see no permanent form anywhere. All is liable to change, and the more we live in transient personality, the more we incur the danger of final death, or total annihilation. It is only the seventh principle, the *Adi Buddha,* that is the Absolute Reality. (4)

Sources: (1) THEOSOPHY, November, 1923; (2) THEOSOPHY, April, 1924; (3) Jasper Niemand, *Path,* June, 1888; (4) Damodar K. Mavalankar, *Theosophist,* May, 1884.

EQUILIBRIUM IN NATURE

In human nature, evil denotes only the polarity of matter and Spirit, a struggle for life between the two manifested Principles in Space and Time, which principles are one *per se*, inasmuch they are rooted in the Absolute. In Kosmos, the equilibrium must be preserved. The operations of the two contraries produce harmony, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which are necessary to each other—mutually inter-dependent—"in order that both should live." If one is arrested, the action of the other will become immediately self-destructive.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

letters • questions • comment

Years ago, in an article in THEOSOPHY, *it was said that if a man reshapes the pattern of his action according to impersonal aspiration, he will not, when the personality disintegrates, be left "defenseless against the centrifugal forces of nature." What does this mean?*

The statement is based on the realities of the law of cycles, and is confirmed by the imagery found in great scriptures. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of the foolish man who "built his house upon the sand," *The Voice of the Silence* calls the "chrysalis of flesh and matter" a "castle of illusion," and urges the disciple to struggle "with the personal, the transitory, the evanescent and the perishable." The implication is plain. Those forms which belong to the cycles of external manifestation are subject to disintegration at the end of their term of usefulness. They are reduced to their primary elements by the work of the destroyers, and those who have identified themselves with such vehicles are without defense against the natural breaking down of the personal structures they have created.

We need these external vehicles, of course, for as long as we have lessons to learn from the experiences of earth life. The counsel is not to abandon them, but to understand their nature, purposes, and limitations. As *Light on the Path* suggests, a man begins to find the knowledge he seeks within himself when he recognizes that the personality is not self, "but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use," through which he may reach to the life beyond personality. Meanwhile, as the *Voice* puts it, "Both action and inaction may find room in thee; thy body agitated, thy mind tranquil, thy Soul as limpid as a mountain lake."

The object, in terms of the question, is to place our center of awareness above the level of the births and deaths of the material or personal form. Our bodies live and vanish, but there is in us a form of being which is not subject to the vicissitudes of cycles. It is not of fleeting life, and when the high purposes of

that being become our own, the laws of matter are unable to interrupt the continuity of consciousness.

There is no need to think of the "centrifugal forces of nature" as evil or bad. They are a necessary part of existence. In the *Ocean* Mr. Judge says that "Nature never does her work in a hasty or undue fashion, but, by the sure method of mixture, precipitation, and separation, brings about the greatest perfection." The separation is necessary in order for better combinations to be produced. The increments of growth toward perfection, however, are not in the forms themselves, but in the resulting soul-knowledge. Bodies or forms are no more than foci of awareness, through which the soul may gain experience. The Self acts only through the creatures, and for human beings the "creatures" are our mortal forms. The law of mortality results not from any rule of "death," but from the action of the life energy itself. Waking life, Mr. Judge says, "may be compared with the arc-electric light wherein the brilliant arc of light at the point of resistance is the symbol of the waking active man." He continues:

> So in sleep we are again absorbing and not resisting the Life Energy; when we wake we are throwing it off. But as it exists around us like an ocean in which we swim, our power to throw it off is necessarily limited. Just when we wake we are in equilibrium as to our organs and life; when we fall asleep we are yet more full of life than in the morning; it has exhausted us; it finally kills the body. Such a contest could not be waged forever, since the whole solar system's weight of life is pitted against the power to resist focussed in one small human frame.

The personal man is subject to a similar disintegrative force of nature on the psychic plane. H.P.B. speaks of this at the end of her article, "Psychic and Noetic Action," explaining that the "central and eternal fire" referred to by Eliphas Lévi is a disintegrating force which eventually destroys the personality, unless "the *Personal Ego*, becoming at one with its divine parent, shares in the immortality of the latter."

The barriers to help from Masters are in ourselves and nowhere else.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

on the lookout

Consuming Madness

Among H. P. B.'s many prophetic utterances are those which seemed but philosophic statements at the time she made them. Yet some of these may now be seen to have quite practical meaning, as for example her remark in "The New Cycle" *(La Revue Theosophique,* March 1889) that the resources of modern materialism would be exhausted—that its flame would "be extinguished for lack of fuel." Whatever her intention in this phrase, an application in the present seems clear enough. The voracious consumption of irreplaceable raw materials by Western civilization, especially since World War II, has become a matter of worldwide concern. The continuing madness of over-consumption is illustrated by the fate of what a writer in *Smithsonian* for last October calls "the largest single ecosystem on earth"—the Amazon River basin. This is an area of 2.7 million square miles of tropical rain forest, with a savanna here and there. The region is a riot of plant and animal life, a vast natural manufactory of oxygen.

A "Counterfeit Paradise"

The *Smithsonian* writer, Robert Campbell, says of the Amazon rain forest:

> It seems permanent and indestructible. Actually, the tropical forest has no firmer lease on life than the lichens and dwarfed biota of the Arctic. Because of the high metabolic rate of everything in the tropics, debris that falls to the ground in the form of dead vegetation, insects and animals, is soon digested by bacteria and fungi, or demolished by the hordes of termites and ants. The resulting nutrients are quickly absorbed by a tangle of roots. In temperate forests, dead matter decays slowly, forming a rich, loamy soil from which the nutrients are extracted over a period of many years, a process in which soil fertility is continually renewed. But here nourishment is withdrawn from the earth at once, the soil itself is nutrient-poor in more than 98 per cent of the basin.
>
> Under these conditions the rain forest, as one anthropologist noted, is a "counterfeit paradise." Some of the soils beneath

it are sandy; others, like the iron-bearing lateritic types, when cleared of vegetation, bake as hard as brick under the tropical sun. In either case, they sustain only remnants of life when stripped. According to satellite data, 62,000 square miles of the Brazilian Amazon rain forest were destroyed by pell-mell development in 1975, a great deal of it to make pasture for beef cattle. At this rate, in 30 years the forest will be gone.

Million Acres Burned Off

One occasion of gathering the satellite data referred to is described by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins in their new book, *Food First* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977):

> In 1975 a United States reconnaissance satellite's heat sensor detected a sudden and intense warming of the earth in the Amazon basin usually associated with an imminent volcanic eruption. A special alert mission was despatched. And what did they find? A German multinational corporation burning down one million acres of tropical forest for a cattle ranch. Unlike the slash and burn of a few acres here and there by Cayapó tribes, the corporation's burning of a million acres means the death of most local wildlife.

Future Wasteland

There is this informative comment by the authors of *Food First:*

> You may find yourself asking how it can be so utterly disastrous to clear a forest. After all, weren't the North American forests cleared to grow food? All forests, however, are not the same. In a temperate forest leaves decay relatively slowly, thereby creating an ever deeper accumulation of nutrient-rich topsoil. In a tropical forest, by contrast, the heat and humidity promote a rapid decomposition of vegetation. A leaf that may take eighteen *months* to fully decompose in England could be broken down in a matter of *hours* in the Amazon. Given such rapid decay, the organic matter for the most part is directly assimilated into new plant life. Tropical plant life, then, is virtually a closed cycle of growth and decay. The minute fraction that escapes this cycle becomes a thin, nutrient-poor topsoil that acts more as a mechanical support for plant life than a source of nutrients. If the multicanopied vegetation is stripped away, torrential rains, sometimes dumping six to eight inches in a single day, wash away the unshielded topsoil, and the equatorial sun bakes what remains into a bricklike wasteland.

To Feed Presses, not People

How can soil like that be exploited when the forest has been

cleared? Only, these writers say, by burning off another few million trees every five or ten years, and moving on to this freshly cleared land. What will be done with this land? Lappé and Collins report:

> Several corporations like Ludwig's, Georgia-Pacific, and Bruyznell are actively stripping the forest (which contains over a sixth of the world's remaining timberland) of its valuable lumber resources. They are in reality mining the forests. The plan is to sweep clean the unwanted trees with more D-9 Caterpillars backed up by a legion of power saws and voracious fires. The next stage calls for planting a "homogeneous forest" of hundreds of thousands of gmelina trees uprooted from West Africa (who knows what environmental havoc this will cause?). The companies are betting the top soil will hold long enough to level these new trees with giant "tree munchers" for export as paper pulp. All this with government incentives and multi-millions in profits, of course.

It is by such means that the "fuel" upon which materialism depends for its continued life is rapidly being exhausted. Fortunately, the voices of those who speak for planetary moral intelligence are growing stronger, day by day. Our mutilated Mother Earth is now giving emphatic instruction in the operations of Karma.

Journalistic Insight

Good science editors are valuable citizens. Not having any large stake in particular theories, and trying, in each report, to make the meaning of a scientific finding or speculation clear to their readers, they develop effective interpretive skills and sometimes tend to regard scientific doctrines from a philosophic point of view. For many years science editor of the *New York Times* during the first half of this century, Waldemar Kaempffert performed useful services of this sort for his readers, and John J. O'Neill did the same for the readers of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Today Albert Rosenfeld writes with similar effect as science editor of the *Saturday Review*. In last year's issue of Dec. 10, he discusses what he calls the "biological revolution," noting that an invasion of areas of human decision by biological intervention seems on the way, and commenting that while biology "cannot supply ethical and moral codes, its implications can surely influence those who draw them up."

Life and Spirit in All

This concern of scientific writers with ethical issues is becoming a familiar theme. Polanyi and Maslow were pioneers in think-

ing of this sort, and later the Princeton cosmologist, John Wheeler, suggested that ethics may be rooted in the cosmos. John Todd, a biologist whose ideas are claiming increasing attention, declares that moral ideas should be at the foundation of a new science, and this conception is implicit within the whole range of the new science of ecology. Mr. Rosenfeld also writes in this mood, in one place taking his keynote from a statement by the late Loren Eiseley:

> "I would say," wrote Loren Eiseley in *The Immense Journey*, "that if 'dead' matter has reared up this curious landscape of fiddling crickets, song sparrows, and wandering men, it must be plain even to the most devoted materialist that the matter of which he speaks contains amazing, if not dreadful, powers and may not impossibly be, as Hardy has suggested, 'but one mask of many worn by the Great Face behind'."
>
> True enough, the building blocks of living molecules have been produced in the laboratory by subjecting inanimate materials to the simulated conditions presumed to exist in the earth's early atmosphere. And it is freely predicted that one day scientists will go all the way to create life in the laboratory. Would that feat, then, permit the materialists to claim victory? Not at all, for the same reasons implied by Eiseley: If life can be made from nonlife, then terms such an "nonlife" and "inanimate" were inappropriate all along. It would not prove that life and spirit are nothing but matter, but rather that life and spirit inhere in the atoms of rocks and the fires of the stars.

Dual Mind

Mr. Rosenfeld notes the irrepressible quest for meaning in life emerging in the work of such thinkers as Julian Huxley and Teilhard de Chardin, then draws attention to the more recent writings of Jonas Salk:

> In *The Survival of the Wisest*, Salk describes what he considers to be our current, inexorable (though modifiable) movement into "Epoch B." He calls the era we are now entering by that name in order to underline its sharp discontinuity with "Epoch A," which encompasses all history until now. To survive in Epoch B, says Salk, will require not only fitness but also wisdom. He believes we will evolve toward the necessary wisdom if we are so motivated. . . . As for Salk, I was present at a recent international conference where he gave a detailed presentation of his Epoch B philosophy and the values it implied. When he had finished, one of the other conferees commented, "Dr. Salk, though you never used the word God, you

have presented what appears to be a fairly complete theology!"

Students of Theosophy who turn to Dr. Salk's books—especially the one cited by Albert Rosenfeld—would be likely to comment differently. They might say that the famous scientist has given in his own words a rather clear distinction between higher and lower Manas, and stressed the need for higher Manas to come into operation for the general good of mankind.

Self-Guided Evolution

Mr. Rosenfeld continues with his review and evaluation of the new spirit in science:

> Does this grand, visionary sweep of evolution constitute one more purely deterministic view, with the human species carried along helpless in evolution's genetic grip? (Edward O. Wilson [author of *Sociobiology*] has suggested that "the organism does not live for itself. Its primary function is not even to reproduce other organisms; it reproduces genes, and it serves as their temporary carrier. . . .") Or can human beings hope to make a contribution, to influence the course of events?
>
> I believe that Teilhard, Huxley, and Salk—and Wilson, for that matter—would all say no to the first question, yes to the second. "The evolution of the universe," wrote Dobzhansky, in *The Biology of Ultimate Concern*, "must be conceived of as having been in some sense a struggle for the gradual emergence of freedom." I have recently suggested myself (in *Modern Medicine*), with unabashed hubris, that nature's game so far may have been to arrive at us, to evolve biologically a creature capable of evolving culturally, a being who might qualify himself to take over his own evolutionary process. If such a surmise were valid, it would mean that the game is open-ended and that we are free to carry it anywhere we like, bound only by nature's own limitations.

A Larger View of Nature

This seems a fine statement, free from preconception, yet at the same time a foreshortened view, since it omits consideration of a more inclusive idea of Nature and a clearer understanding of her limitations. If evolution, as Theosophy holds, is essentially moral and spiritual, the intellectual being properly in the service of both, then the "limitations" or environment of nature includes psychic and moral forces, laws and phenomena, as well as physical. One has only to consider the light that would be thrown on present-day moral issues by a serious investigation of Karma and Reincarnation. Such inquiry may become quite natural for

the scientists of the future. There seems no serious obstacle to this save the slow pace of mind-changing among scientific thinkers. The door is at any rate now open, and there are probably already a great many scientists who would agree with Mr. Rosenfeld when he says: "I would certainly not try to build a set of values solely out of biology." This is his concluding paragraph:

> René Dubos strikes the contemporary chord when he urges us to develop an almost religious sense of symbiosis with the earth. "The goal of this relationship," he writes in *Science*, "is not the maintenance of the status quo, but the emergence of new phenomena and new values. Millennia of experience show that by entering into a symbiotic relationship with nature, humankind can invent and generate futures not predictable from the deterministic order of things, and thus can engage in a continuous process of creation."

The Community of All Life

A book which may prove of general interest to Theosophists is *Nature's Economy* by Donald Worster, published recently by the Sierra Club ($15). Examining the philosophical and moral underpinnings of the ecology movement, the author finds that Neoplatonism, involving a holistic view of nature and teaching a world of sympathy and interdependence, "has been an important influence on ecological thought." While the term Ecology was coined by Haeckel in 1866, this new branch of science did not enter the zone of public interest until the 1960s, when the impact of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* began to be widely felt. Mr. Worster recognizes a strong anticipation of ecological thinking in Alfred North Whitehead's criticism of mechanistic, Cartesian assumptions, making all nature appear "senseless, valueless, purposeless," and among later writers of great influence on ecological thought were Joseph Wood Krutch and Aldo Leopold. Krutch was especially effective in uniting the moral with the practical in human affairs. He wrote (as quoted by Worster):

> We must be a part not only of the human community, but of the whole community; we must acknowledge some sort of oneness not only with our neighbors, our countrymen and our civilization but also some respect for the natural as well as the man-made community. Ours is not only "one world" in the sense usually implied by that term. It is also "one earth." Without some acknowledgement of that fact, men can no more live successfully than they can if they refuse to admit the

> political and economic interdependency of the various sections of the civilized world. It is not a sentimental but a grimly literal fact that unless we share this terrestrial globe with creatures other than ourselves, we shall not be able to live on it for long.

Emerging Idealism

Quite plainly, ecology is a new kind of science with moral conceptions of responsibility and obligation at its roots. Mr. Worster sees in its underlying spirit a direct challenge to the habitual outlook of the commercial civilization of the West "with its dedication to technology, self-advancement, individualism, and the domination of nature." The author comments:

> Can middle-class environmentalists bring off a revolution against their own economic self-interest, or do they in reality mean to enact liberal, pragmatic reforms that will leave the base of the bourgeois culture intact? Is it possible at all, two hundred years after Watts' steam engine, to abandon the Industrial Revolution, or has the chain of events bound us to a self-propelled technology? What would an alternative social order founded on the science of ecology look like— and would the middle class really accept such a world?

Mr. Worster notes, however, that the strongest appeal of the ecology movement is to the American middle class, and there are other contemporary studies showing that to the idealism of the ecologists and environmentalists may be added the powerful persuasions of Nature herself.

The Penalties of Waste

A volume filled with these persuasions is Erik Eckholm's *Losing Ground* (Norton, 1976), a carefully assembled body of evidence showing that man's present use of the planet is causing serious waste of the arable lands where the food of the world is grown. In his foreword Maurice F. Strong says of this book:

> It provides concrete examples of the serious ecological deterioration that is taking place through deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion and abandonment, desertification, the silting of irrigation systems and reservoirs, and the changes in the frequency and severity of flooding. In all of these, the increasing intensity of humanity's pressure on the land and the continuation of careless and short-sighted land use practices compound the effects of such natural phenomena as droughts and

floods, often turning the temporary problem they create into large-scale disaster.

Community Projects Succeed

Interestingly, a restorative program strongly recommended by Erik Eckholm is the planting of trees in many parts of the world. Already there have been some attempts in this direction, leading to a rather basic discovery:

> In country after country, the same lesson has been learned: tree-planting programs are most successful when a majority of the local community is deeply involved in planning and implementation, and clearly perceives its self-interest in success. Central state governments can provide stimulus, technical advice, and financial assistance, but unless community members clearly understand why lands to which they have traditionally had free access for grazing and wood gathering are being demarcated into a plantation, they are apt to view the project with suspicion or even hostility. With wider community participation, on the other hand, the control of grazing patterns can be built into a program from the beginning, and a motivated community will protect its own project and provide labor at little or no cost.

Cooperation Indivisible

A passage in a concluding chapter of *Losing Ground* illustrates the spirit of the book:

> Unfortunately, there are no quick solutions to the dismal cycles of poverty, ecological decay, and rapid population growth. To be sure, conservation ethics and problems need to be treated daily as "news" by the media and as part of basic curriculum in educational systems. Regulations protecting essential forests and mountain slopes also need to be strictly enforced. But these measures will never succeed unless the populace has the technical and financial means to cooperate, and this means reaching the masses with ecologically sound agricultural advice and with credit facilities; maximizing rural employment on farms and in small-scale industries; and breaking down the social, legal, and economic structures that deny the poor basic opportunities for advancement. It means creating participatory institutions, whether through local government, cooperatives, or communes, that give the poor a sense of responsibility for and control over their destiny. That these prerequisites of ecological recovery are identical to the tactics of a more general war against poverty and hunger should come as no surprise.

Restoration of Ideals

As this writer shows, there is a close relationship between practice of fellowship with the rest of life and the fellowship of man. "Help nature and work on with her" is a Theosophic counsel familiar to all serious students, and as for the widespread hunger and poverty in the present world, there is H.P.B.'s stirring conclusion of her article, "The Fall of Ideals," in which she says:

> Before Satan, the incarnate PROTEST, repents and reunites with his fellow men in one common Brotherhood, all cause for protest must have disappeared from earth. And that can come to pass only when Greed, Bias, and Prejudice shall have disappeared before the elements of Altruism and Justice to all. Freedom, or Liberty, is but a vain word just now all over the civilized globe; freedom is but a cunning synonym for oppression of the people in the name of the people, and it exists for castes, never for units.

It is hardly remarkable that the books and articles devoted to the restoration of the planet all reveal full awareness of the dependence of any successful program for this purpose on true ties of brotherhood among the peoples of the earth, a goal that can hardly be reached save by genuine effort toward justice for all. A new spirit of self-reform seems implicit in the common-sense recommendations of ecological and environmental science.

The Price of Religious Candor

Encouraged, perhaps, by the claim of one of the editors of *The Myth of God Incarnate* (recently published in England) that virtually "all scholars" agree that Jesus did not present himself as "divine," the head of the department of religion in the University of Richmond (Virginia) dared to say to an audience of atheists gathered in Richmond's first Unitarian Church: "I don't imagine for a minute that he [Jesus] would have had the audacity to claim the deity for himself. I think the (Bible) passages where he talks about the son of God are later additions —what the church said about him." As might be expected, the Southern Baptists, including the alumni of Richmond's Baptist-founded university, objected. A flood of angry protests caused the president of the university to transfer the offending professor, Dr. S. Robert Alley, out of the religion department and to apologize to a gathering of Southern Baptist ministers who demanded that Alley be fired. Fortunately, the university's faculty gave Alley

unanimous support, but the wide gap between the views of present-day theologians and most church-goers remains unclosed. Dr. Alley paid the penalty for revealing that his own convictions have little in common with the doctrines taught and preached to generation after generation of lay Christians. (*Los Angeles Times,* Jan. 7.)

Popular Confusion

More than half a page in *Time* for Oct. 3, 1977, is devoted to what the writer casually identifies as "past-lives therapy." Ever since the bewildering emergence from the Astral Light of the story of Bridey Murphy, years ago, an increasing number of hypnotists have been regressing subjects to what they claim is the consciousness of the to-be-born individual in the womb, and then to supposed past lives. One practitioner enjoys a fee of $75 a session for this service, and many others are apparently doing a rushing business, including a man who takes on seventy-five subjects at a time. A California psychologist who has collected these "memories" of past lives is quoted as saying that "no patients ever say they lived as Cleopatra, Jesus, or Joan of Arc; usually patients recall lowly past existences as peasants, serfs or tribe members—a fact that many therapists believe lends credence to the tales of a past life." Yet the unlikelihood of recollections obtained by this means being *egoic* seems clear from what we know of the psychic results of hypnotism, which are certainly not calculated to bring through memory of life-experiences in an entirely different body. However, all this careless talk of reincarnation has at least the effect of making the idea generally acceptable, even if the sort of evidence offered has little more reliability than the basis on which reincarnation was emphatically denied by the great majority a generation or more ago. For background reading on this subject, attention is suggested to the article, " 'Reincarnation' of Shanti Devi," in THEOSOPHY for February, 1938 (26:172), which considers the possibility that one in a sensitive condition might pick up a clot of skandhas from the astral realm, and then suppose that the "memories" elicited are a part of one's past life. Another article indicating further possibilities, with important quotations from H.P.B., is "Problems of Reincarnation," THEOSOPHY, April, 1939 (27:270).

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